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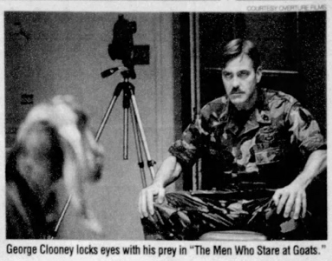
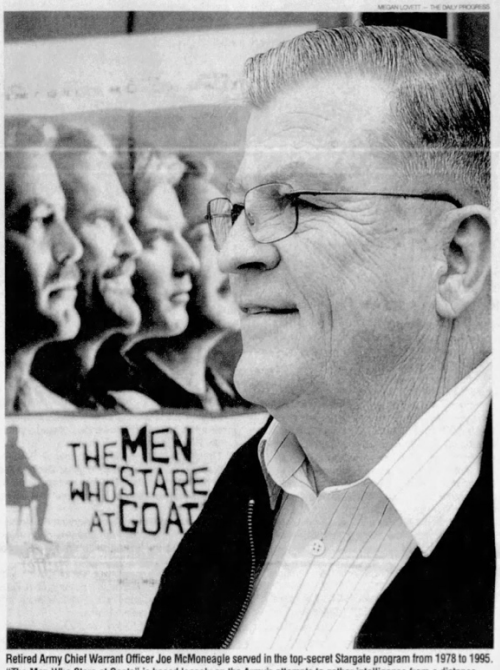
Psychic showdown



George Clooney locks eyes with his prey in "The Men Who Stare at Goats."

Glaring at goats? Remote-viewing pioneer separates fact from fiction

By David A. Maurer
dmaurer@dailyprogress.com | 978-7244



Retired Army Chief Warrant Officer Joe McMoneagle served in the top-secret Stargate program from 1978 to 1995. "The Men Who Stare at Goats" is based loosely on the Army's attempts to gather intelligence from a distance.

Joe McMoneagle recently drove from his Nelson County home to Carmike Cinemas just north of Charlottesville in search of the truth.

Well, actually, in search of how much truth there is in the recently released movie "The Men Who Stare at Goats." After all, the film does open with the declarative sentence, "More of this is true than what you might imagine."

McMoneagle, a retired Army officer, is eminently qualified to discern the veracity of that statement.

But first, a little about the film.

The premise of the comedy revolves around Lyn Cassady, portrayed by George Clooney. He's a Green Beret who had been a member of a group of psychic soldiers who'd undergone training in the hope they would become the vanguard for New Age soldiers with super powers.

The movie is based on a 2004 nonfiction book of the same title by Jon Ronson that supposedly looks into factual paranormal military programs and techniques. Retired Army Col. John Alexander is mentioned throughout the book.

During his military career, Alexander served with U.S. Army Special Forces (Green Berets), and had knowledge of programs Ronson alludes to. In an e-mail Alexander separates fact from fiction.

"While listed as nonfiction, the facts were extrapolated almost beyond recognition," Alexander said of Ronson's book. "While some Special Forces units experimented with various techniques, the vast majority of the incidents came from one of two other sources.

"[Informal] psychic research programs were conducted in the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command. There was also a unique think tank called Task Force Delta.

"Delta was arguably the most innovative organization in the world. With support of senior leadership, we were consciously pushing the envelope. It should be noted that all of the explorations undertaken were done based on solid rationale."

The title of the book and movie stems from an alleged incident where one of these so-called New Age soldiers caused the death of a goat by staring at it. McMoneagle said it never happened, and he would know.

The Nelson County man was an active member of the U.S. Army's top-secret project code named Stargate during its entire lifespan from 1978 to 1995. This is the project the movie is loosely based around.

McMoneagle's expertise is in remote viewing. This, simply stated, is the attempt to describe or draw details about a place, person, thing or event without having prior knowledge of it.

Like Cassady, McMoneagle was among the military's top remote viewers. He said that when Stargate started in 1978, the Army tested thousands of people for their psychic abilities, eventually winnowing it down to a handful of volunteers.

McMoneagle was the first person selected — and also was the first and only subject to ever record five perfect remote viewings during the testing phase. Since retiring from the military he has done more than 100 televised demonstrations of remote viewing in seven countries.

For example, in 1995, McMoneagle appeared on the ABC television program "Ghosts, Mediums and Psychics." Producers had become aware of him through his 1993 book, "Mind Trek: Exploring Consciousness, Time and Space Through Remote Viewing." They decided to put him to the test on live television.

"What they did was bring in a guy who was a location scout for movie companies," McMoneagle said. "He spent two weeks finding hundreds of sites in Houston that weren't similar in any way.

"One of the sites was randomly selected while we were on the air. Then they sent someone to that location, and after showing me a picture of that person asked me to describe where that person was.

"There's a river in Houston with docks, boat slips and that sort of thing. What I drew was the exact location where she was by the river, including a seawall and a barge tied up next to where she was standing.

"I nailed it, and the reaction was one of amazement. My accuracy rating during televised demonstrations of remote viewing is about 80 percent."

For the past 25 years McMoneagle has provided support to companies, corporations and law enforcement agencies through his private company, Intuitive Intelligence Applications. He doesn't discuss anything related to this work.

"I get most of my work because I guarantee anonymity of my clients," McMoneagle said. "I never discuss companies, people or police departments I work for, specifics about individual jobs or the kind of things I've done.

"I never speak about any of that, because my clients know they would suffer the same ridicule I would suffer. But, yes, a lot more of this sort of thing goes on than most people think."

So, what did he think of the movie?

"It's a real funny comedy, and I enjoyed most of it," McMoneagle said. "But by all means, don't try to equate it in any way to any reality that might be existent.

"There's no relationship whatsoever between what they've presented in the movie and reality."

The true story of Stargate is every bit as interesting as a make-believe yarn about two guys bumbling around Iraq in wartime.

Of course, a movie about Army personnel sitting in windowless rooms and drawing things like the interior of a top-secret Soviet manufacturing plant thousands of miles away isn't likely to hold an audience's attention for long.

George Clooney (left) and Kevin Spacey in a scene from the new comedy, which can be seen at the Carmike.

See REMOTE on C8

And yet for two decades this was a common occurrence. McMoneagle writes about it in his 2002 book, "The Stargate Chronicles: Memoirs of a Psychic Spy." He said during the project's existence government agencies from the FBI to the CIA regularly enlisted their talents to gather intelligence.

"Our project was very serious," McMoneagle said. "We supported every intelligence agency in America for 20 years.

"We were approved and funded year to year based on our successes. We had failures, certainly, but we were a very valid, workable project that did some really good things.

"The Stargate project was located in two very small buildings at Fort Meade, [Md.]. I was there from the beginning in October 1978 to September 1984, when I retired from the military.

"Then I was immediately hired by Stanford Research Institute International as a research associate so they could keep me within the project. SRI-I was the science side of the project. By doing that, they were able to continue to use me for both collection and research."

Stargate was active during the Cold War, so many of the targets for remote viewing were within the Soviet Union. The project also did a great deal of research on remote viewing to learn what was at play, and the extent to which it could be used.

One experiment was conducted to see if remote viewers could gather information on military equipment under development. The target they were given was the Abrams battle tank, which was in the prototype stage at the time.

McMoneagle said they were able to draw in detail the tank's optical targeting mechanism, its auto-loading mechanism, the interior seating arrangements and the type of armor being developed for it.

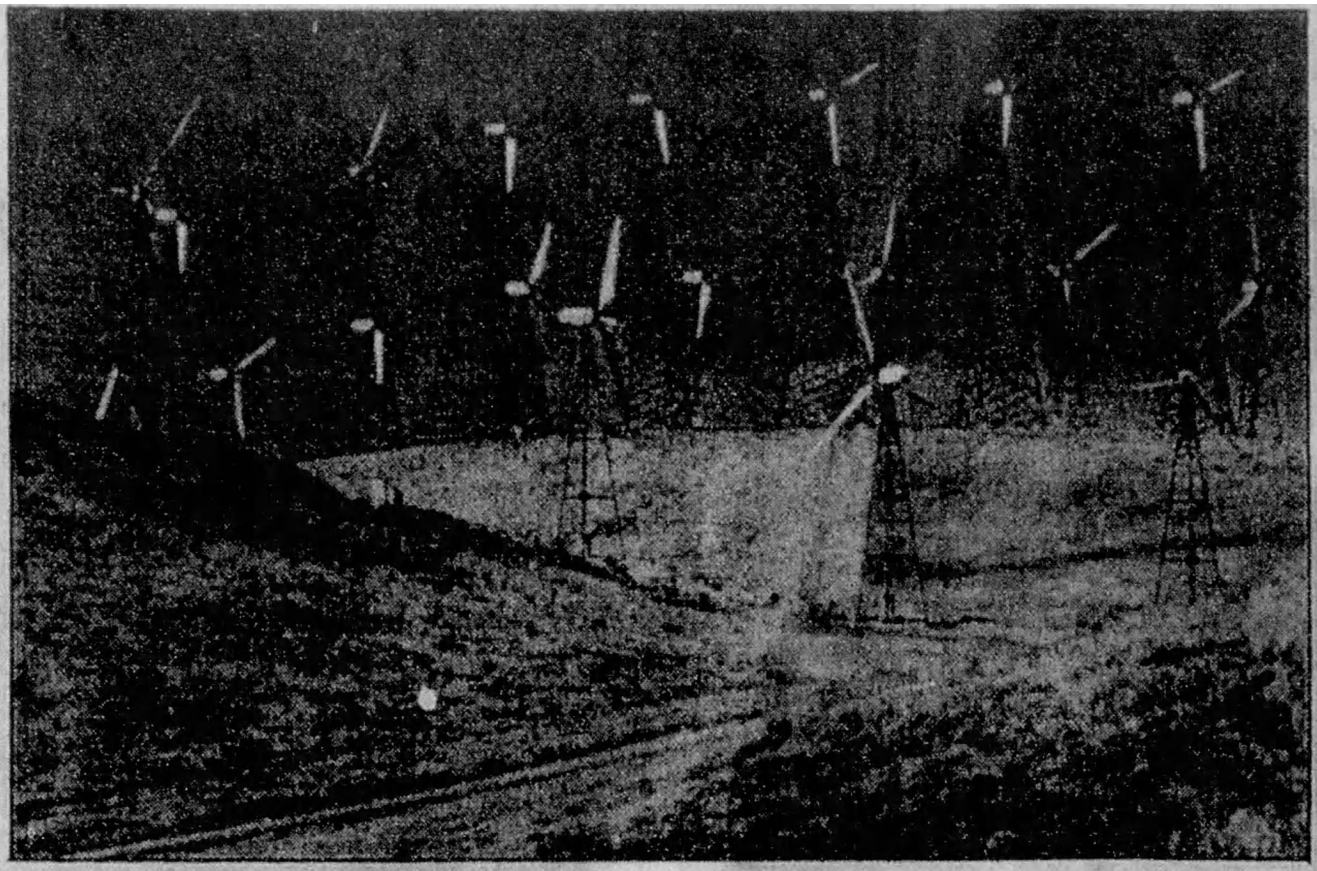
So what is the theory behind people being able to seemingly do the impossible?

"What we think drives the psychic ability is the fact that it's a survival mechanism," McMoneagle said.

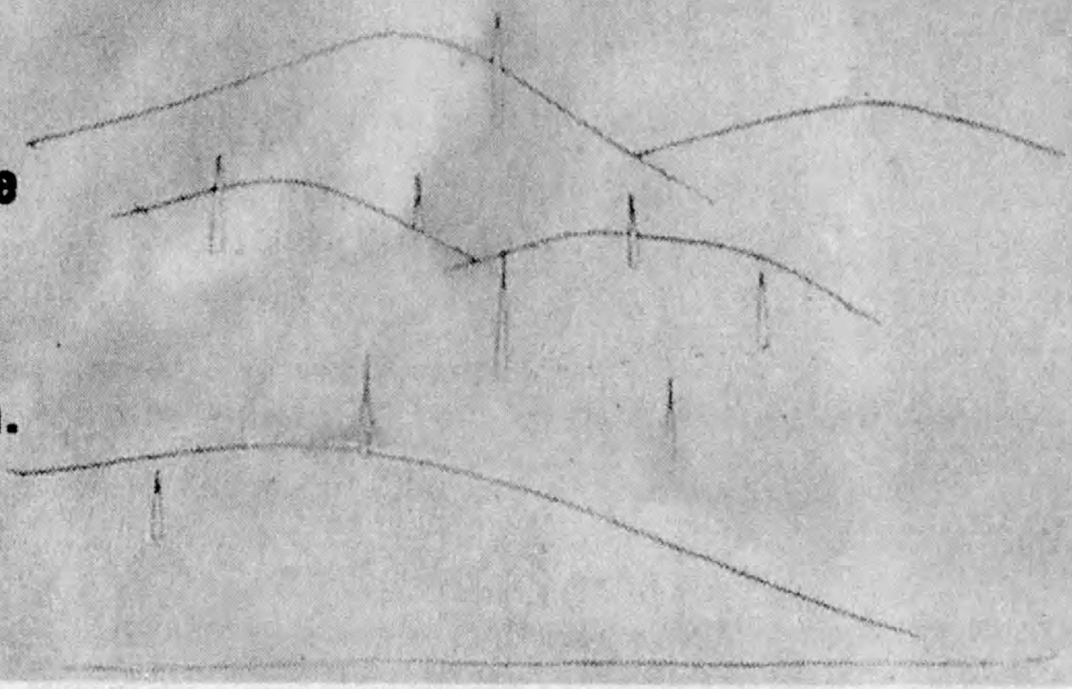
"In the old days you needed to know things like which cave you didn't want to sleep in, because the cave bear was coming back that night.

"Psychic functioning is just another sense like sight or hearing. It became less used over time, as our ability to collect direct information through other means grew.

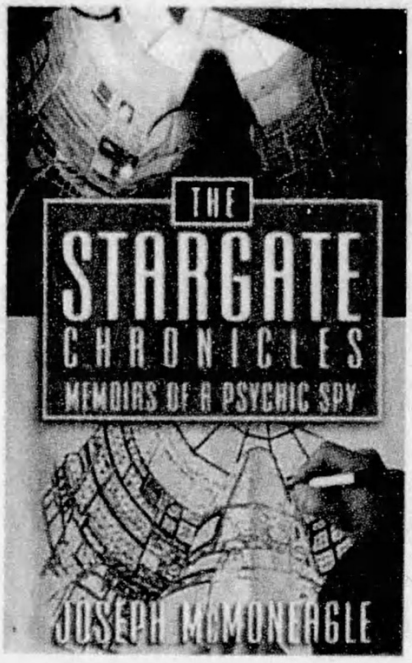
"But we know from testing in the lab that every human being that has ever been tested for psychic ability has showed some

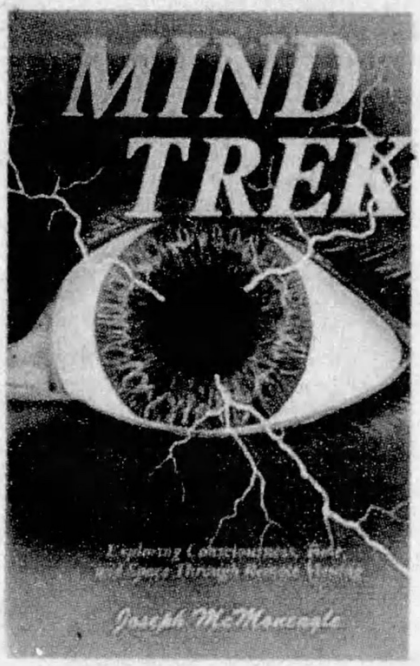


Joseph McMoneagle drew this picture of generators in California.



Joe McMoneagle's remote drawing of generators in California closely matched a photograph.





Joe McMoneagle has penned five books based on his work.

capacity or capability. But it's also talent-based. Everyone can do it, but your world-class players are few and far between."

Statistically, McMoneagle said research shows that about one in 200 people shows world-class psychic ability.

That translates into about 300,000 people with higher-than-normal psychic abilities in the United States alone.

So, who are they?

"They're your best stockbrokers," McMoneagle said. "They're your best and most intuitive surgeons, your best cops and detectives, who operate from their gut.

"They're all around us, and if you ask them why they did something they'll say, 'Oh, I did that because my gut told me to.' But if you said, 'Well, I think you're psychic,' they'll say, 'You're crazy.'

"There's a lot of negative things associated with the word 'psychic.' Everybody thinks tea-leaf readers and palm readers and that sort of thing. But in fact, it's a normal capacity in the human being."